

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10
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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO USICA WASHDC PRIORITY
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 0617

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USICA

USICA FOR PGM/RC, PGM/F, PGM/PPA, VOA/PA, AF
FROM ARS

E.O. 11652: N/A
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: HORN OF AFRICA

1. JEUNE AFRIQUE (APRIL 26) CARRIES ANALYTIC ARTICLE,
"THE AMERICAN ILLNESS," BY ASSISTANT CHIEF EDITOR AMIN
MAALOUF. (MAALOUF RECEIVED FACILITATIVE ASSISTANCE FROM
FPC'S IN NEW YORK AND WASHINGTON.) EXCERPTS FOLLOW:

2. " 'IS THE OGADEN AFFAIR A TYPICAL CASE OR AN EXCEP-
TION?' THIS QUESTION, WHICH IS BEING POSED MORE AND
MORE IN WASHINGTON GOVERNMENT CIRCLES, IMPLIES MORE OR
LESS THIS: IS AMERICAN INACTION IN THE FACE OF THE
SOVIET AND CUBAN VICTORY IN THE HORN OF AFRICA DUE TO
SOME IMPOTENCE ON THE PART OF THE FORMER 'WORLD
POLICEMAN' OR RATHER TO SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE
SOMALI-ETHIOPIAN CONFLICT?....

3. "THE US PARALYSIS IS MUCH MORE SERIOUS THAN HAD
BEEN THOUGHT ON THE MORROW OF THE VIETNAM WAR. THERE
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IS, TO BE SURE, A TRAUMATISM WHICH EXCLUDES ANY FOREIGN
MILITARY ENGAGEMENT (ABOVE ALL TRUE CONCERNING AFRICA,
FOR ON OTHER CONTINENTS, THERE ARE ZONES WHERE INTER-
VENTION CANNOT BE DISMISSED A PRIORI: WEST BERLIN, ISRAEL
OIL GULF, CENTRAL AMERICA, ETC.).

4. "BUT THERE IS NOT ONLY THIS TRAUMATISM. THE

CONTINUAL ATTACKS DIRECTED AGAINST THE CIA HAVE COMPLETELY UNDERMINED--WHO IS COMPLAINING--THE REDOUTABLE AGENCY'S CAPACITY TO ACT. MANY AMERICANS, AND ABOVE ALL FOREIGNERS--INCLUDING HIGH OFFICIALS--ARE TODAY AFRAID TO COOPERATE WITH (CIA), AND WITH OTHER AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS, BECAUSE THEY KNOW THAT ONE DAY THEY WILL BE DENOUNCED. THAT IS ONE CONSEQUENCE OF THE MORALITY WAVE THAT HAS SHAKEN THE UNITED STATES SINCE THE WATERGATE SCANDAL.

5. "PARADOXICALLY, THE MAN WHO WAS BROUGHT TO POWER BY THAT WAVE, JIMMY CARTER, IS TODAY THE MOST APPARENT VICTIM OF THE WATERGATE SPIRIT, BECAUSE THE PRESIDENT'S AUTHORITY SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY WEAKENED WITH RESPECT TO THAT OF CONGRESS. IN THE OGADEN CONFLICT, FOR EXAMPLE, CONGRESS REFUSED TO MODIFY THE MILITARY ACCORDS WITH SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAN TO PERMIT THE TWO OIL POWERS TO FURNISH AMERICAN ARMS TO SOMALIA....

6. "OPPOSITE WASHINGTON'S VIETNAM TRAUMA IS MOSCOW'S EGYPT TRAUMA. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ITS HISTORY, THE SOVIET UNION BELIEVES IN THE VIRTUES OF SEMI-DIRECT MILITARY INTERVENTION FAR FROM ITS FRONTIER AND, THANKS EQUALLY TO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ITS CUBAN ALLIES AND TO THE PARALYSIS OF ITS AMERICAN ADVERSARIES, IS RECORDING INCONTESTABLE SUCCESSES....
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7. "THERE IS THUS VISIBLE PARALYSIS IN WASHINGTON, WHICH WAS MADE EVIDENT IN RECENT MONTHS. BUT IT DOES NOT APPEAR THAT THE SOMALI CASE IS SUFFICIENT TO UNDERSTAND THE MAGNITUDE AND CONSEQUENCES FOR AFRICA OF THIS 'AMERICAN ILLNESS.'

8. "INDEED, EVEN IF THE US HAD HAD A LARGER SPACE FOR POLITICAL AND MILITARY MANEUVERING, IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW IT COULD HAVE ADOPTED A DIFFERENT ATTITUDE IN THIS CONFLICT.... 'LEGALLY SPEAKING,' SAYS A MEMBER OF CONGRESS, 'THE SOVIET-CUBAN POSITION IS SET IN REINFORCED CONCRETE. THE SOVIETS AND CUBANS CAME AT THE REQUEST OF A LEGAL GOVERNMENT TO DEFEND A LEGAL CAUSE. WE COULD DO NOTHING BUT EXPLAIN CLEARLY TO THE SOMALIS THAT THEY WERE HEADED TOWARD A DEAD END. MAYBE THAT WAS NOT DONE CLEARLY ENOUGH.'

9. "WASHINGTON WOULD HAVE THEREFORE MAINTAINED A CERTAIN AMBIGUITY TO PROMOTE A SPLIT BETWEEN MOGADISCIO AND MOSCOW. NOT AT ALL, SAYS A HIGH STATE DEPARTMENT

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OFFICIAL. THE US, HE AFFIRMS, HAD TOLD THE SOMALIS THAT
EVEN IF IT HAD WISHED TO DO SO, IT COULD NOT HELP THEM,
BUT THEY CONTINUED TO BELIEVE THEY COULD DRAG WASHINGTON
INTO THE AFFAIR. IN FACT, THE AMERICANS LET THEM KNOW
CLEARLY THAT THEY WOULD NOT OPPOSE AN ETHIOPIAN
INVASION OF SOMALIA AS LONG AS GENERAL SIAD BARRE'S
ARMY REMAINED IN THE OGADEN. AND IT WAS UNDER THIS
THREAT THAT THE SOMALI LEADER ORDERED HIS TROOPS TO
RETREAT.

10. "IF ONE ADDS TO THESE FACTORS THE FACT THAT SOMALIA
IS, ACCORDING TO AMERICAN CRITERIA, NEITHER DEMOCRATIC,
NOR LIBERAL (ECONOMICALLY), AND DOES NOT RESPECT
HUMAN RIGHTS, AND HAS EIGHT TIMES FEWER INHABITANTS
THAN ETHIOPIA, ONE CAN UNDERSTAND WHY WASHINGTON COULD
NOT PLAY THE SOMALI CARD.

11. "IN THE MIND OF AMERICAN OFFICIALS, THE OGADEN
AFFAIR CONSTITUTED A REAL TRAP. THE US IS TIRED OF
ALWAYS BEING ON THE WRONG SIDE, THAT IS, THE SIDE OF
RACISTS, UNPOPULAR DICTATORS, AND AGGRESSORS. NOT
ONLY BECAUSE IT IS 'IMMORAL', BUT ABOVE ALL BECAUSE IT
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DOES NOT PAY. IT WANTS TO GET RID OF THE 'UGLY AMERICAN' AND GIVE ITSELF A NEW IMAGE WHICH SOME INTELLECTUALS, SMILING, CALL 'LEFTIST'. ...IN AFRICA, THAT WOULD PERMIT IDENTIFICATION--OR AT LEAST AN ATTEMPT AT IDENTIFICATION--WITH BLACK NATIONALISM AND THE PROGRESSIVES. IT IS NOT BY CHANCE THAT THE TWO PRINCIPAL COUNTRIES WITH WHICH THE US IS COORDINATING ITS POLICY ARE NIGERIA AND TANZANIA, THAT IS, TWO COUNTRIES THAT ADVOCATE A CERTAIN SOCIALISM AND ENJOY SOME PRESTIGE EVEN IN THE SOCIALIST WORLD. THE PRINCIPLE OF THIS POLICY IS SIMPLE: EVERYONE WILL COME TO US THANKS TO OUR ECONOMY IF WE DO NOT CHASE THEM OFF BY OUR POLICIES

12. "BUT, IN THE US, NOT EVERYONE IS CONVINCED BY THIS ORIENTATION....IF WASHINGTON DOES NOT MANAGE IN THE COMING MONTHS TO SET UP (IN RHODESIA) A BLACK REGIME THAT IS STABLE, DEMOCRATIC, AND TOLERANT OF THE WHITES, THE ENTIRE AFRICAN POLICY WILL BE CALLED INTO QUESTION.

13. "THAT SAID, THE AMERICANS ARE CONSOLING THEMSELVES IN THINKING THAT THE SOVIETS AND CUBANS ARE FACING A MUCH MORE DIFFICULT TEST: THAT OF ERITREA. WILL THEY BECOME INVOLVED IN A LONG WAR UNPOPULAR IN THE ARAB WORLD? THE AMERICANS ARE NOT UNHAPPY TO SEE THEIR ADVERSARIES FACED WITH A VIETNAM-TYPE PROBLEM, AND THEY SEEM TO BE ENCOURAGING THEIR ALLIES IN THE REGION--NOTABLY SUDAN--TO SUPPORT THE ERITREANS IN PROMISING TO IMPEDE ANY MILITARY ACTION AGAINST THEM. TRAUMATISED BY THE OGADEN AFFAIR, THE SUDANESE, SAUDIS, AND IRANIANS ARE HESITATING, AND THE PROMISES OF AMERICAN AID ARE COMING UP AGAINST A TENACIOUS SCEPTICISM.

14. "BUT THE AMERICANS ARE CONFIDENT: 'THE SOVIETS HAVE UNCLASSIFIED

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LONG CAPITALIZED ON AMERICAN ERRORS; NOW WE SHALL CAPITALIZE ON THEIR ERRORS.' THE PROOF, THEY SAY: THE SOVIETS HAVE TRULY REGISTERED SUCCESSES IN ANGOLA AND ETHIOPIA, BUT THEY HAVE SUFFERED MORE SERIOUS SETBACKS IN EGYPT, SUDAN, SOMALIA, GHANA, AND ELSEWHERE. THE LOSS OF EGYPT CANNOT BE COMPENSATED, AND THE PORT OF BERBERA IS MUCH MORE IMPORTANT THAN THAT OF MASSARA. STILL, AMERICAN OFFICIALS RECOGNIZE THAT THIS ARGUMENT HAS NOT CONVINCED THEIR AFRICAN ALLIES: 'YOUR ATTITUDE IS PARTICULARLY CYNICAL,' THEY HAVE BEEN TOLD. 'WHEN ONE LOOKS AT THINGS FROM WASHINGTON, ONE CAN TELL ONESELF THAT THIS OR THAT GREAT POWER HAS WON TWO COUNTRIES, THEN LOST THREE, THEN REGAINED ONE OR TWO. THIS DOES NOT

CHANGE THE TOTAL BALANCE, BUT WHEN ONE LOOKS AT THINGS FROM THE AFRICAN COUNTRIES THEMSELVES, THEY SEEM MUCH DIFFERENT, BECAUSE EACH POINT SCORED BY ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER CAUSES A POLITICAL EARTHQUAKE.'

15. "THE AMERICANS RAISE THEIR ARMS TO THE HEAVENS WITH A RESIGNED POUT; THE AFRICAN LAND WILL CONTINUE TO TREMBLE." END EXCERPTS.
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